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WHAT IS AIDS? AIDS stands for **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome**. It's caused by a virus that destroys your body's immune system, leaving you open to illnesses that a healthy person would normally fight off.

AIDS? The virus that causes AIDS is known as the **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)**. If HIV enters your bloodstream, you can eventually develop AIDS.

Most people infected with HIV do not feel sick and may be unaware of their infection, *but they can still infect others*. A “carrier” can pass HIV to others in semen, blood or vaginal secretions without either person knowing it.

A woman infected with HIV can pass the virus to her unborn child during pregnancy or the birth process. A baby can also get HIV from an infected mother through breast milk.

HOW DO WOMEN GET HIV? The two most common ways that women become infected are:

■ *Having sex with someone infected with HIV.* The virus is found in the semen, blood or vaginal secretions of infected persons and can be passed between men and women, from woman to woman and from man to man during sexual intercourse: anal, vaginal and oral.

■ *Sharing IV needles, or “works” with an infected person.* HIV from an infected person can remain in a needle, syringe or “works” and then be injected directly into the bloodstream of the next person who used it. Sharing needles to inject IV drugs is the most dangerous form of needle sharing.

It's a fact . . . More than half of the women with AIDS in this country were infected by sharing IV needles. About one-third developed AIDS by having sex with an infected partner.

Before 1985, some people became infected with HIV from a transfusion with contaminated blood or blood products. Since 1985, blood used for transfusions has been screened, and the nation's blood supply is safer now than ever before. Organs, semen and tissues are also screened for HIV in Illinois.

WHAT ABOUT HIV AND PREGNANCY? A pregnant woman infected with HIV can pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy or while giving birth. If a woman has shared IV needles or has had sex with a partner whose sexual history or drug use history is unknown, she should see a doctor or health care professional before becoming pregnant.

HOW CAN WOMEN PREVENT AIDS? Mothers who have shared IV needles or have had sex with someone whose sexual or drug use history is unknown, should not breastfeed. An infected mother can pass HIV to her baby by breastfeeding.

HOW CAN WOMEN PREVENT AIDS? Don't share IV needles. Don't have sex if *you don't know for a fact* that your partner isn't infected with HIV.

HOW CAN WOMEN PREVENT AIDS? If you are using drugs, STOP. If you are waiting to get into treatment, clean your syringe or "works"; flush your "works" with bleach then water, flush a second time with bleach then water.

The only sure way to avoid HIV infection through sex is to abstain from sexual intercourse or engage in sexual intercourse only with someone who is not infected and only has sex with you. Latex condoms have been shown to help prevent HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases, especially when used in combination with spermicide non-oxynol 9, which is found

in contraceptive foams, jellies and creams. But condoms are not foolproof. You have to use condoms properly. And you have to use them every time you have sex — vaginal, anal or oral.

WHAT Before the onset of AIDS, a person who is infected with HIV may feel perfectly healthy. Others may experience one or more flu-like symptoms such as:

ARE THE SYMPTOMS • Unexplained tiredness
• Swollen glands or lymph nodes
• Continuing fever, chills or “heavy” night sweats

OF HIV • Continuing dry cough or shortness of breath

HIV INFECTION? • Unexplained weight loss
• Unusual spots on the skin or in the mouth

Remember, other illnesses might cause one or more of these symptoms. If symptoms persist, see a doctor.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNs . . .

For more information about HIV infection, AIDS, or the nearest counseling and testing site, call the Illinois Department of Public Health toll-free AIDS hotline at

1-800-AID-AIDS (1-800-243-2437)
or **1-800-782-0423 TDD only.**

If you have concerns about HIV infection, see your doctor or health care professional.

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AIDS is a health concern for women. Thousands of women across the country have developed AIDS — about half of whom have died. These women, mainly through sex and shared needles, have received something they don't want — a disease that has no cure.

The number of women infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is growing. Women with HIV pose a health risk to their unborn children and sexual partners.

Minority women, especially African Americans and Hispanics, represent about 75 percent of all women with AIDS, but *AIDS can affect women of every race.*

AIDS has no cure, but you can prevent yourself from getting AIDS. Women can protect themselves, their loved ones and their unborn children.

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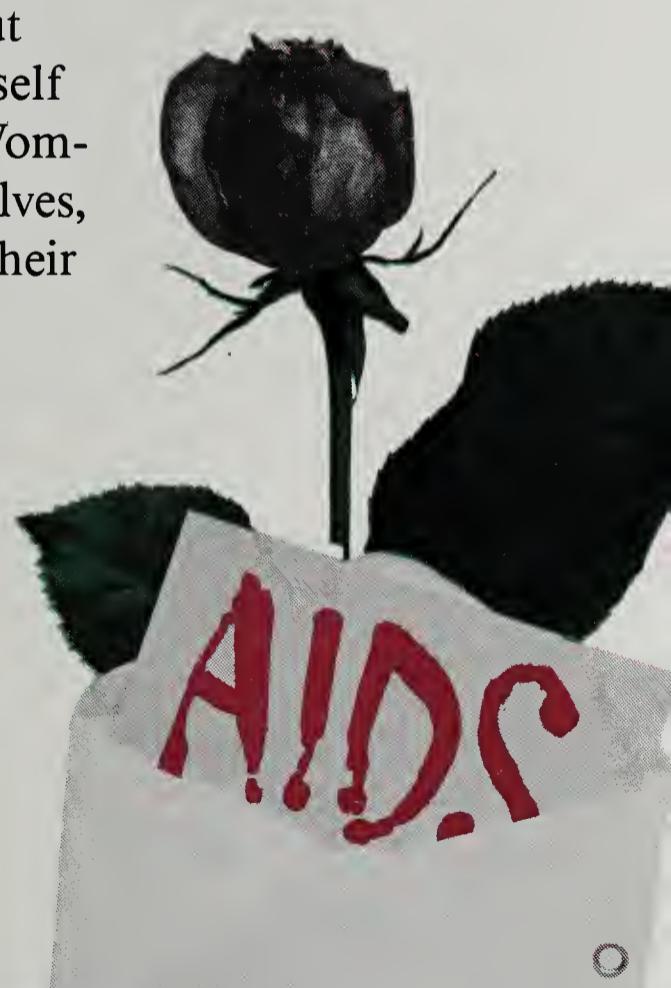
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THE FACTS FOR LIFE

HIV is spread through sex with an infected partner. Both men and women can spread or get HIV.

To avoid HIV infection through sex, don't have sex, or have sex only with a partner who isn't infected and only has sex with you.

Using condoms significantly reduces the chances of getting HIV.

A person infected with HIV may have no symptoms but can spread the disease.

Once infected with HIV, a person is infected for life.

Infected pregnant women can pass HIV to their unborn children.

HIV is spread by sharing needles.

HIV is not spread by mosquitoes.

Donating blood is safe.

HIV is not spread by hugs, handshakes or kisses.

 There is no cure or vaccine for HIV.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON AIDS, HIV, AND HIV TESTING?

Talk with your physician or local health department. You can also call the Illinois Department of Public Health toll-free AIDS hotline at 1-800-AID-AIDS or TDD/TTY 1-800-782-0423.

All of your questions will be answered in strict confidence.

